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TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING SEPTEMBER 22, 1981

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FOR ADDRESSEE POSTS' INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE, FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM TODAY'S PRESS BRIEFING. SOMEWHAT ABBREVIATED.

Q. HAS THE ADMINISTRATION GIVEN UP TRYING TO CONVINCE THE SAUDI LEADERSHIP TO AMEND THE PACKAGE TO MAKE IT ACCEPTABLE FOR JOINT U.S.-SAUDI CONTROL OF THE AWACS?

A. I THINK ALL I CAN REALLY SAY ON THAT AT THE MOMENT IS THAT DISCUSSIONS DO CONTINUE WITH THE SAUDIS, AND INDEED WITH THE CONGRESS, ON THE ISSUE, BUT I HAVE NOTHING SPECIFIC TO OFFER YOU ABOUT THAT PARTICULAR THING.

Q. YOU DON'T HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO SAUDI OFFICIALS IN TODAY'S POST?

A. NO, I DON'T. DISCUSSIONS ARE CONTINUING.

Q. WHO IS LEADING THESE DISCUSSIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION NOW?

A. LET ME MAKE SURE THE RECORD IS STRAIGHT ON LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION REGARDING THE PROPOSAL TO SELL AWACS TO SAUDI ARABIA.

THE LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY HAVE NOT CHANGED. RICHARD ALLEN, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER, REMAINS IN CHARGE OF COORDINATION WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION AND WITH THE CONGRESS. THE SECRETARY OF STATE REMAINS IN CHARGE OF THE OVERALL FOREIGN POLICY OF THE ADMINISTRATION, AND THE FOREIGN POLICY RELATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES. HE ALSO, WITHIN THIS CONTEXT, I WOULD NOTE, HAS GENERAL POLICY DIRECTION AND A SUPERVISION OF FOREIGN MILITARY SALES, BUT THE PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEGOTIATION OF TERMS AND EXECUTION OF LETTERS OF OFFER AND AGREEMENT ON FOREIGN MILITARY SALES RESTS WITH THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.

Q. YOU HAVE SAID TWICE THAT DISCUSSIONS WILL CONTINUE.
A. YES.
Q. TOWARDS WHAT END, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?
A. WELL, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS PROPOSED A SALES PACKAGE.
A. RIGHT
Q. NOW YOU ARE HAVING DISCUSSIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA, AND I AM ASKING YOU TO TELL US WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE DISCUSSION?
A. I DON'T WANT TO CHARACTERIZE THOSE DISCUSSIONS BEYOND WHAT I HAVE SAID.
Q. IS IT LEADING TOWARDS A COMPROMISE? IS THAT WHAT YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE?
A. I DON'T WANT TO SPECULATE ON WHETHER THERE WOULD OR WOULD NOT BE A COMPROMISE. I DON'T WANT TO CHARACTERIZE THE DISCUSSION.

Q. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT NUMBER IS ON THE SENATORS WHO SUPPORT THE ADMINISTRATION'S PACKAGE?

A. NO, WHEN I ORIGINALLY GOT INTO THIS QUESTION OF SIGNATORIES, WE ARE NOT, AS I SAID, KEEPING A TALLY. WE HAVE NOT DONE POLLS AND KEPT NUMBERS.

Q. ARE YOU SERIOUSLY STATING THAT YOU HAVE NOT MADE AN EFFORT TO FIND OUT HOW MANY SENATORS ARE FOR OR AGAINST THE SALE.
A. WHAT I AM SAYING IS THAT IN IDENTIFYING THOSE WHO ARE LEANING ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, THAT WE ARE NOT TRYING TO MAKE ANY PARTICULAR CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE NUMBERS AT THIS STAGE OF THE GAME, BECAUSE IT IS INAPPROPRIATE, SINCE WE HAVEN'T YET MADE OUR CASE TO EVERYBODY.

Q. WHAT CASE ARE YOU MAKING? ARE YOU MAKING A CASE FOR AN OUTRIGHT SALE, SOLE SAUDI ARABIAN CONTROL OF THE PLANES?

A. YOU ARE ASKING ME THE SAME QUESTION IN ANOTHER WAY--WE'RE GOING FOR A DIFFERENT PACKAGE, AND I SAID, [illegible]

IS THE SALE OF THE WHOLE PACKAGE TO THE SAUDIS.

Q. AS IT WAS ORIGINALLY PRESENTED TO US?

A. WE CERTAINLY THINK THAT THAT IS AN ADEQUATE PACKAGE, BUT WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ANY CHANGES OR NOT AS A RESULT OF THESE DISCUSSIONS, I AM NOT GOING TO SPECULATE.

Q. DO YOU ANTICIPATE THAT IF THE AWACS WILL NOT GO THROUGH, THAT THE OTHER PART OF THE ENHANCEMENT PACKAGE, CALLED THE F-15, WILL ALSO FALL OR IT WILL GO THROUGH AS A SEPARATE OR TO BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE AWACS THING?

A. FIRST, I DON'T WANT TO SEEM TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION THAT AWACS WOULDN'T GO THROUGH, BUT IN ANY CASE, MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THESE ISSUES COULD BE ADDRESSED INDIVIDUALLY BY THE CONGRESS. THAT IS, IF ANYBODY WANTS TO CORRECT THAT, I WILL STAND READY TO BE CORRECTED, BUT I DON'T THINK SO. I THINK THEY CAN VOTE INDIVIDUALLY ON THESE ELEMENTS IF THEY WISH TO.

Q. THERE IS AT LEAST ONE REPORT, GOING BACK TO FRIDAY EVENING, THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE REJECTED AN AMERICAN EFFORT TOWORK OUT A JOINT CONTROL AND COMMAND STRUCTURE FOR THE AWACS SALE. IS THAT REPORT CORRECT?

A. AS I INDICATED BEFORE, IN ANSWER I THINK TO A SIMILAR OR THE SAME QUESTION, I DON'T HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THAT, EXCEPT THAT DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE.

Q. WILL FORMAL NOTIFICATION GO AHEAD, I BELIEVE IT IS ON WEDNESDAY, AS SCHEDULED?

A. THAT IS MY UNDERSTANDING

Q. IS ANY CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO HOLDING OFF ON FORMAL NOTIFICATION?

A. I HAVE NOT HEARD OF ANY.

Q. WE HAVE FOUR AWACS THERE AT THIS TIME. HAVE THE SAUDIS INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD LIKE THOSE TO STAY IN PLACE INDEFINITELY UNTIL THERE ARE AIRCRAFT DELIVERED TO THEM IN 1985?

A. I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION. I WOULD GUESS PERHAPS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF GETTING AN ANSWER WOULD BE TO REFER YOU TO THE PENTAGON ON THAT.

Q. WHEN THE FORMAL NOTIFICATION GOES UP--I JUST WANT TO KNOW HOW THIS PROCESS WORKS--ONCE IT HAS GONE UP, IS THAT THE PACKAGE THEN THAT GETS VOTED ON, OR CAN MODIFICATION BE MADE IN THE PACKAGE EVEN AFTER THE FORMAL NOTIFICATION?

A. I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT. LET ME SEE IF I CAN GET IT.

Q. COULD YOU COMMENT ON THE MEETING BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER WHICH TOOK PLACE LAST WEEK IN N. Y. AND LASTED FOR NINETY MINUTES AND THEY DISCUSSED A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS? DO YOU ANTICIPATE THAT WILL MAYBE LEAD AGAIN TO THE RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE SOVIET UNION? WHAT IS YOUR REACTION ON THAT?

A. THE ONLY REACTION I HAVE TO THAT I GAVE LAST WEEK AND THAT IS THAT COMMUNICATION IS BETTER THAN NO COMMUNICATION. I'M AFRAID THAT I DON'T HAVE ANY COMMENT

Q. HAVE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO STUDY MR. BEGIN'S REMARKS REGARDING A PRE-CONFEDERATION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JORDAN REGARDING TRADE AND A PORT FOR JORDAN?

A. NO, WE HAVE SEEN REPORTS THAT HE DISCUSSED THE FUTURE OF ISRAELI-JORDANIAN RELATIONS IN THE COURSE OF HIS TRADITIONAL NEWS INTERVIEW, BUT WE HAVE NOT SEEN THE FULL TEXT OF THE STATEMENT YET, AND THEREFORE DON'T WISH TO COMMENT IN DETAIL.

OBVIOUSLY, WE WOULD WELCOME THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORMAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JORDAN IN THE CONTEXT OF A NEGOTIATED MIDDLE EAST PEACE.

Q. IN FBIS TODAY, THERE IS A STORY FROM TEL AVIV TALKING ABOUT THE ISRAELI DELEGATION AT THE AUTONOMY TALKS WHO WAS DISPLEASED BY THE OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR ATHERTON THAT THE U.S. IS HOLDING CONTACTS WITH THE PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, AND INTENDS TO GO ON DOING SO. AND THEY SAY THAT EPISODE IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE U.S. OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN ASSERTED PUBLICLY THAT THE U.S. IS HOLDING CONTACTS WITH THE PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. IS THIS THE FIRST TIME, AND WOULD YOU COMMENT ON THIS DISPLEASURE? DID YOU RECEIVE ANY PROTEST FROM THE ISRAELIS ON THAT MATTER?

A. QUITE FRANKLY, I AM UNAWARE EITHER OF THE SUPPOSED STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ATHERTON OR THE ISRAELI REACTION TO IT.

Q. DOES THE U.S. IN FACT TALK WITH OR HAVE CONTACT WITH THE PALESTINIAN ARABS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES?

A. I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION, I WILL TAKE IT. CLAPP